



## THE PHYSICIAN'S *Bookshelf*

**THE STRESS OF LIFE**—Hans Selye, M.D. McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 330 West 42nd Street, New York 36, N. Y., 1963. 324 pages, \$2.75 (Paperback).

In the preface, the author states that "The main purpose of this book is to tell in a generally understandable language what medicine has learned about stress." It is divided into five "books" or parts.

Part 1 deals with "The discovery of stress." The author discusses several definitions for the words "stress" and "discovery." He then has a section on witch doctors, evil spirits and incantations, on ponos (the toil of disease) and homeostasis (the staying power of the body). His "first glimpse of stress" occurred as a "young medical student." And this was followed by G. A. S., presumably an abbreviation for the general adaptation syndrome. There are several pages dealing with his difficulties in evolving a suitable terminology, ending with the decision that "le stress" could be used as a universal word . . . for example der Stress, lo stress, el stresse and o stress.

Part 2 is entitled "The dissection of stress." The author divides certain situations into local adaptation and general adaptation syndromes. This portion is marked "Intended only for those who are seriously interested in the nature of normal and morbid life." There are several diagrams of a hypothetical adrenal, hypophysis and intermediate neural and hormonal communication systems.

Part 3 deals with "The diseases of adaptation." The possible role of excessive or insufficient corticoid production in the development of various diseases, bacterial, viral, degenerative, neoplastic and otherwise, is extensively discussed. There is a special chapter headed "When scientists disagree" in which the author notes that in Ernest Jones' biography of Freud, the psychiatrist Walther Spielmeier had at first denounced the use of psychoanalysis as mental masturbation. "By 1910 the mere mention of Freud's theories was enough to start Prof. Wilhelm Weygandt, then Chairman of a medical congress in Hamburg, to banging his fist and shouting 'This is not a topic for discussion at a scientific meeting; it is a matter for the police.'"

Part 4 is entitled "Sketch for a unified theory." The author writes "This section is intended only for those who are keenly interested in the nature of normal and morbid life. Like Book 2 it is somewhat heavy . . ."

Part 5 is entitled "Implications and applications." "The most important applications of the stress concept as regards purely somatic medicine are derived from the discovery that the body can meet various aggressions with the same adaptive-defensive mechanisms. A dissection of this reaction teaches us how to combat disease by strengthening the body's own defenses against stress." "Any time during the day, in discussions, at work and at play, when I begin to feel keyed up, I consciously stop to analyze the situation. I ask myself: 'Is this really the best thing I could do now, and is it worth the trouble of putting up resistance against counterarguments, boredom, or fatigue?' If the answer is

no, I just stop; or whenever this cannot be done gracefully I simply "float" and let things go on as they will, with a minimum of active participation (e.g., during most committee meetings, solemn academic ceremonies, and unavoidable interviews with crackpots)."

On page 304 the author notes "Another fascinating field for future research is the study of stress in relation to cancer. It is well known that a large variety of cancers do not grow well in animals or people subjected to severe stress."

By this time you may gather that the reviewer feels that the present work is not entirely a topic for scientific discussion; it is a matter for extensive revision and clarification. Since it is a paperback reprint of the 1956 edition, one may ask why such clarification hath not evolved ere this. Perhaps it has.

There is a glossary of terms and an index. The latter uses a remarkable "symbolic shorthand system" evolved by the author, who is a medical graduate from the distinguished German university of Prague, and currently director of the Institute of Experimental Medicine and Surgery at the University of Montreal.

L. H. GARLAND, M.D.

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**BONE CHANGES IN HEMATOLOGIC DISORDERS (Roentgen Aspects)**—A Mount Sinai Hospital Monograph—John E. Moseley, M.D., Associate Attending Radiologist, The Mount Sinai Hospital, New York, N. Y.; Director, Department of Radiology, Sydenham Hospital, New York, N. Y. Grune & Stratton, Inc., 381 Park Avenue South, New York 16, N. Y., 1963. 261 pages, \$9.50.

This monograph is divided into eight sections, many of them excerpted from *The Journal of the Mount Sinai Hospital* in recent years.

Section 1 covers the bone changes seen in the following anemias: congenital aplastic anemia, iron deficiency anemia, erythroblastosis, spherocytosis, sickle cell disease and thalassemia.

The second section deals with "classic hemophilia" and Christmas Disease.

The third section deals with leukemia and myelosclerosis with its host of polysyllabic identical siblings.

Then follow sections on osteopetrosis, multiple myeloma, the reticuloendothelioses and the malignant lymphomas.

Finally, there is an interesting section discussing the differences of opinion pertaining to differentiation of the reticuloendothelioses, and the more recent findings in the various forms of sickle cell disease.

Disorders of the hematological system are frequently difficult to elucidate; the differentiation of those in which roentgen changes occur in the bones will benefit from this work. This monograph can therefore be recommended as a handy reference work to clinicians concerned with the evaluation of bone changes secondary to blood disorders, especially radiologists, internists, pediatricians and orthopedists.

L. HENRY GARLAND, M.D.